

## ***FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET***

**Meeting Date:** August 2, 2012

**Agenda Item:** BCWMA, Boyd-Dryer Forest Restoration Project

**Division / Bureau:** Wildlife

**Action Needed:** Endorse Course of Action

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 5 minutes

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### **Background**

Two small ponderosa pine stands within the Blackfoot Clearwater Wildlife Management Area totaling 83 acres are infested with mountain pine beetle. These stands of dead and dying trees are overstocked and visible to the public passing by and using the WMA. Removing these recently killed and infested trees would restore the stands to a more typical ponderosa pine stocking rate, allow recovery of some value from the harvested trees to reduce the overall cost of the treatment, and would continue to demonstrate timber management on FWP forested habitat. DNRC foresters provided FWP with treatment recommendations and a preliminary assessment of costs and value. Healthy trees and large diameter snags would be retained. These stands are not within the portion of the BCWMA that most elk use early in winter. FWP does not expect the proposed treatment to substantially disturb wintering elk. Treatments would begin immediately after the Nov. 10 public closure and be completed by mid-winter. Weed treatments would be conducted spring of 2013.

### **Public Involvement Process & Results**

FWP has received many comments in recent years urging removal of these dead and dying trees as they are highly visible from both the Blackfoot-Clearwater Headquarters and Woodworth Road. Treatment of diseased, and fire-prone stands like these is consistent with recent legislative direction including **87-1-201(9(iv))** which states "*The department shall implement programs that address fire mitigation, pine beetle infestation, and wildlife habitat enhancement giving priority to forested lands in excess of 50 contiguous acres in any state park, fishing access site, or wildlife management area under the department's jurisdiction.*" The public supported a larger, but adjacent, DNRC timber management project set to begin winter 2012 on its ownership within the BCWMA. FWP would develop and scope an Environmental Assessment of the project during summer 2012 for public review and comment.

### **Alternatives and Analysis**

No action: The remainder of the healthy trees within and adjacent to the infested stands would likely die. Trees will lose most residual value by 2014. Proposed action: Treatment by a FWP-contracted forester would occur fall 2012. About 300,000 board feet of lumber and 200 tons of pulp wood would be sold to local mills and proceeds would be deposited into FWP's Forest Management Acct. per **87-1-201(S3)**. Any net revenue would be used to conduct further forest habitat management projects.

### **Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

This project is expected to be cost neutral, would restore fire-adapted ponderosa pine stands on the BCWMA, and would demonstrate sound management of forested wildlife habitat. Treatment should occur fall and early winter 2012/2013 to recover value, operate with snow-covered ground, and to avoid conflict with hunters and wintering elk.

### **Proposed Motion**

I move that FWP proceed with an environmental analysis and public review of the 83-acre timber management project on Blackfoot-Clearwater WMA.